

7

THE
MISSION,
A POEM.

BY THOMAS BECK,
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, *K*
Bury Street, St. Mary Axe, London.
AUTHOR OF "THE PASSIONS TAUGHT BY TRUTH."

Zec. ix. 10. "And he shall speak peace to the heathen, and his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth."

From tribe to tribe, from pole to pole,
The sacred sound of truth shall run,
Till Jesu's sceptre sways the whole,
And glory is on earth begun.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR:
SOLD BY T. CHAPMAN, NO. 151, FLEET-STREET;
AND BY THE AUTHOR,
MIDWAY PLACE, DEPTFORD ROAD.

1796.

[Price Six-pence.]

DEDICATION.

TO the DIRECTORS of the MISSIONARY
SOCIETY this Poem is dedicated, as a
testimony of respect to that zeal which
has brought forward a Plan for the
Instruction and Salvation of so large
and so benighted a portion of the
human Race,



By THE AUTHOR.

P R E F A C E.

THE following Poem was written under the impression made by the late Public Meetings, for the purpose of establishing a Missionary Society.—When about half of it was composed, it met with a sudden interruption from the Author's seeing in a shop-window, a Poem with the title of *The Missionary*; from which it was concluded that the subject as anticipated: But upon reading that Poem sometime afterwards, it appeared that the Writer had pursued a different course, and the present production was completed.

A subject of this kind being principally narrative, it excludes the play of imagination, but supplies that deficiency by the more solid materials of truth. The events the publishing of the Gospel has produced among men, are so numerous, so wonderful, and so important, that the little piece presented in the following verses, can but glance imperfectly at a few of them; yet it has been so attempted as to present an historical sketch of things leading to the accomplishment of those great promises, which the Work of the Missionary Society seems to be one means of introducing among mankind. Praying the great Head of the Church to succeed the endeavours of his servants,

I remain, &c.

THOMAS BECK.

ARGUMENT.

SKETCH of the Work of God in past ages—
Coming of the Messiah; his work and conquest—
Sending the Disciples; their labours and success—
The Spread of Religion in England; its effects—
The Errors of Popery—The Reformation—The
Promises of future Gospel Glory—The awaken-
ing of Zeal in our own times—Providence rousing
us to Repentance—An Argument thereto from
abused Mercies—Abominations of the Slave-
trade—The Mission begun, tho' not a national
act—The qualifications of a true Missionary—
Difficulties and dangers of the Work—Errors of
Paganism various, hard to remove—A Persecutor
converted—Gospel oppos'd to all the vices and
errors of Nature—Arguments to aid the design—
from past encouragement; from our past crimes
and national sins; from the certainty of success.

THE MISSION.

COME, sacred Muse, and with ethereal fire,
Thy lowly suppliant illumine and move;
With words and sentiments my theme inspire,
As fuit a subject of unbounded love.

The din of arms, the pageantry of state,
The wak'ned muse disdains to sing of now;
Or join the flatt'ry paid the meanly great,
Or bind the laurel on a murd'rer's brow.

Of different men---of other aims I sing!
The cause that God-like Mercy shall sustain;
Whence praise to God and peace to man shall spring—
The blessings of Messiah's glorious reign.

Great God! how wonderful thy grace appears!
What pow'r and wisdom doth its course display
Which, flowing on through times six thousand years,
Still keeps the even tenour of its way.

Backward our faith beholds the promise giv'n,
“The woman's seed shall bruise the serpent's head;”
The patriarchs rise—the Law descends from heav'n,
And holy seers the sacred counsels spread.

By ways mysterious, God collects and keeps
 Unhurt, through ages past, his chosen band—
 In one vast ruin Egypt's madness sweeps,
 And leads his Israel safe to Canaan's land.

Tho' oft their faith corrupt and lives impure
 Expos'd them to a Father's chast'ning rod ;
 Still was his glory and his church secure :
 They were his people—he their faithful God.

At length, time's long predicted fulness came*—
 Prophetic expectation fill'd the earth ;
 Angelic heralds through the sky proclaim
 Jehovah's advent—the Messiah's birth.

His holy life—his painful death declare
 The sacred law's extent, the sinner's woe ;
 What man's defects and God's perfections are,—
 What misery wants, and mercy can bestow.

On earth the labours of Messiah done,
 And death and hell subdued beneath his frown ;
 Triumphant he ascends his native throne,
 And pours his purchas'd gifts on rebels down.

Like fire from heav'n, the promis'd Spirit came,
 And kindled zeal in each disciples breast—
 Boldly they publish the Redeemer's name,
 And in the flames of death his love confess.

Untaught, unarm'd, unpatronis'd, they went,
 And tyrants forc'd to dread the wrath to come;
 The Jew, the Greek, in vain their veng'ance spent,
 The Priesthood fell—the Oracles were dumb.

Through barb'rous lands the zealous Preachers roam,
 And wond'ring nations blest the change they found;
 Sweet as when roses in wild deserts bloom, *
 And strange as harvests reap'd from rocky ground.

At length the sound in Britain's isle prevails;
 And Pagan altars stain'd with human gore,
 The druid's song—tradition's mystic tales,
 And Thor and Woden fell to rise no more.

But soon, alas! the enemy prepares
 To scatter seeds of error 'mong the corn—
 With truth's pure grain sprung superstition's tares,
 And with love's rose grew persecution's thorn.

Then mitr'd priests the hoodwink'd soul beguil'd,
 And, of God's heritage, became the lord's;
 With worldly pomp the simple church defil'd,
 And argu'd not with truth, but fires and swords.

Then righteousness was sold, and pardons bought,
 And Romish shrines a costly traffic drove;
 Then bauble relics lying wonders wrought,
 And fools were fleec'd, and monks and friars throve.

* Isa. xxxv. 1.

Yet a few names preserv'd their garments pure,
 And found, in rocks and caves, a safe retreat ;
 Rich were their graces, tho' their portion poor ;
 And scant their morsel, yet the crust was sweet.

But God, who light from darkness doth command,
 Who Abr'ham from Chaldean blindness brought ;
 Who Moses call'd from Egypt's pagan land,
 From gloomy cloister's reformation wrought.

Now Wickliffe, Luther, Calvin—glorious names !
 With holy zeal, shook of the Papal yoke,
 Struck out a spark that kindled soon to flames,
 While superstition's glare expir'd in smoke.

E'en men and measures that might devils suit,
 Oe'r rul'd, upheld the cause they meant to blast ;
 Thus English Harry's passions of a brute,
 From hence, at length, both Popes and Tyrants cast.

As winds resistless urge their streams along,
 Nor eye can see, nor arm arrest their flight ;
 So Truth's great spirit rolls a current strong,
 Unseen by art, and unrestrain'd by might.

Silent and secret, as the leaven lurks,
 Till through the mass the quick'ning power steals ;
 So heav'nly Grace within the bosom works,
 Till all the soul its renovation feels.

As the bright orb breaks through the shades of night,
 And scatters round the world the blaze of day;
 So truth shall shed o'er earth its radiant light,
 And chase the gloom of ignorance away.

The dawn is past—now the meridian sun
 On distant nations pours its lucid streams;
 From pole to pole the glorious day shall run,
 Till all mankind partake its cheering beams.

How great the promise, how divine the grace,
 That shall accomplish the unbroken word!
 The truth shall spread thro' ev'ry age and place,
 "And all the earth shall know and fear the Lord*;

"Jesus shall o'er the gentile nations reign †,
 "The heathen his inheritance shall be ‡;
 "The wild barbarian and the polish'd train,
 "And Jew and Gentile all shall worship me §.

"He shall the people rule in gentle peace ||,
 "He shall to man his image lost restore;
 "Then war, and blood, and tyranny shall cease,
 "And wasting and destruction be no more ††.

* Isa. xi. 9.

† Isa. lx. 3.

‡ Ps. ii. 8.

§ Isa. lxvi. 23.

|| Ps. lxxii. 7.

†† Isa. lx. 18.

- “ The savage, cruel as the beast of prey,
 “ Shall change to lamb-like innocence and love;
 “ The sucking child with crested serpents play—
 “ The vulture fierce become an harmless dove *.
- “ The sword, the spear, that pierc’d the human heart,
 “ New forg’d, shall aid the cheerful lab’ror’s toil,
 “ Directed by the peasant’s nobler art,
 “ Shall prune the vine, or plough the fruitful soil †.”

E’en in the midst of our degenerate days,
 The spirit seems on the dry bones to move ‡,
 And different sects agree at length to raise
 A general temple of religious love.

Beneath its basis bigotry is laid ;
 Oh ! may the monster never rise again,
 With jarring tongues, to thwart a brother’s aid,
 And rear a Babel monument in vain !

The times portentious rouse us from our dreams,
 Warn us of wasted good—of scornful pow’r—
 How avarice labors—how ambition schemes,
 And wanton pleasure stains the midnight-hour.

Isa. xi. 6. 8. † Mich. iv. 3, 4. ‡ Ezek. xxxvii. 3.

Hear, Europe, hear the angry voice of God;

Mercy has woo'd in vain—now judgment calls;
Ye men of wisdom, listen to the rod *,
And learn contrition e'er the vengeance falls.

“ Nor truth, nor mercy in your land appears,
“ Nor knowledge of the God whose name ye bear ;”
The poor oppress'd, unheeded, waste their tears,
While guilty pow'r doth feeble justice dare †.

Your fleets on ev'ry ocean spread their sails,
And float the world's vast treasures to your doors;
What best in either hemisphere prevails,
Collected meet in your unnumber'd stores.

Before you Wisdom spreads her ample page,
And Art her thousand wheels of wonder plys;
While sons of Science teach a curious age
To search the air, the earth, the seas, the skies.

Clear as the day is truth to you reveal'd,
And parts and learning have maintain'd the cause,
By wise men witness'd, and by martyrs seal'd,
Who lov'd its doctrines, and who liv'd its laws.

* Mich. vi. 9:

† Isa. lix. 4. 14.

How have you learnt such matchless love to feel,?

How have your trusted talents been employ'd?

What nation has been better'd by your zeal?

What good imparted of the good enjoy'd?

With skilful hands your artists form their wares,

With thirst for gain your merchants search the globe,

With iron heart each storm the seaman bears,

And finds new worlds along his trackless road.

But ah! what mutual interchange ye make,

Devoid of duty, interest, or sense!

Your vices with your arts you thither take,

And pride and luxury import from thence.

Oh! turn your eyes to Afric's injur'd shore,

Mourn o'er your nation's guilty traffic there;

Ye deal in slaves—ye thrive on human gore,

And chains and whips for fellow-men prepare.

Acts Britain thus, whose boast is to be free!

Who burns with ardor at the hallow'd name!

Alas! she does, and stabs her liberty,

By binding others with a tyrant's claim.

Can ye, who languish on the lap of ease,
 Who faint beneath a summer's sultry day,
 Or shrink and shiver at the northern breeze,
 And fret a life of indolence away—

Can ye endure to hear the suff'rer's moan,
 Torn from his wife, his country and his friends;
 Who heaves to heav'n oppression's bitter groan,
 And weeps and bleeds till death his mis'ry ends?

Ah! surely then a God of justice hears!
 Your brother's blood doth loud for vengeance cry!
 Their hidden wrongs before his face appears,
 And sure, tho' late, his thunderbolts shall fly.

Ah! should not England earnestly begin
 Her blood-recorded mischief to efface;
 With shame to put away her nation's sin,
 And God-like mercy on its throne replace.

It is begun—for often private worth
 Will force its way e'en through a nation's guilt;
 Oh! may the bright example rouse the earth,
 Till the great universal church is built!

It is begun—for God hath giv'n the word,
 And the great crowd that publish it appear *;
 The pray'r of love—the cry of zeal is heard—
 And the set time to favour Zion's near †.

It is begun—the Messengers arise,
 Who home, and ease, and interest forego,
 Who souls to win are made divinely wise,
 Resolv'd Christ crucifi'd alone to know ‡.

Not learning's mimic priests, the brood of schools,
 Tutor'd to eat an hireling's worthless bread;
 But plain mechanics, skilful with their tools,
 At once to guide the hand, and teach the head.

Yet, taught by grace the mysteries of heav'n,
 And warm'd within by sense of love divine,
 Are pioneers, the rugged path to ev'n,
 And seize the ore which wisdom may refine.

Hope broods with pleasure o'er the pleasing scene,
 Pourtrays the op'ning prospect fair and wide;
 Sails with them o'er the seas that roll between,
 And wafts them to the globe's remoter side.

* Psa. lxxviii. 11. † Psa. cii. 13. ‡ 1 Cor. ii. 2.

Around them now the fable tribes attend,
 While one interprets well the joyful sound ;
 Amaz'd, to find so white a man their friend,
 The welcome calumet of peace goes round.

But, ah ! nor soon, nor patiently resigns
 The prince of darkness his accustom'd hold ;
 Dark ignorance with superstition joins
 To damp a love so warm and zeal so bold.

Their priests, a juggling band, begin to dread
 Their craft in danger, should the truth prevail ;
 And priests in ev'ry place the crowd have led
 To spurn that light which makes their traffic fail.

So the Ephesian demagogues exclaim'd,
 When the Apostles taught them truth divine ;
 " Great is Diana, Grecian goddess, fam'd,
 " For we collect our treasures at her shrine *."

Some distant chief now hears the strange report,
 That a bold wanderer dare his gods deny ;
 With fierce revenge he seeks the saint's resort,
 And vows so vile a blasphemer shall die.

* Acts xix. 27.

With him a band unite to aid the deed ;
 Death's song is fung, and each his hatchet takes :
 They trace his steps, and silently proceed
 To strike the blow or e'er suspicion wakes.

They find him—but so strangely is he found,
 As stirs their wonder, and their wrath suspends ;
 For prying numbers stand amaz'd around,
 Whilst at his forge a broken axe he mends.

Again they seek him, and again they find,
 'Tis in a sick man's hut, where mis'ry groans ;
 He foothes his body, and consoles his mind—
 Cheers up his hope, and silences his moans.

The wond'ring witnesses of so much love
 On sudden find their enmity abate,
 Then feel within them soft compassion move,
 And melt to kindness undisserved hate.

Again they seek him, but with diff'rent views,
 'Tis now to hear what God the Christians praise ;
 They list with rapture to their joyful news,
 And at their simple worship trembling gaze.

Impress'd, convinc'd, adown each sable cheek
 The tear of shame, of true contrition flows ;
 And the fierce host, now gentle, kind, and meek,
 Return firm friends, who came determin'd foes.

Alas ! the mind with eagerness devours
 The wildest errors while the truth's unknown ;
 And the more false, they are more truly ours,
 And are most lov'd, because they are our own.

Thus India's Bramins bind their bondage fast,
 And shut the light from out their dreary den ;
 And e'en the Hindoo's, most degraded cast,
 Reject the grace that would transform them men.

The Faquar thus with hope his fancy warms,
 That nature's ruin nature's God shall please,
 And countless wild austerities performs,
 His horrid God to pleasure or appease.

Some to the hissing serpent bow the knee,
 And some the antic monkey fall before—
 Some carve an idol from their favourite tree,
 And some a bird and some a beast adore.

Attracted oft by some stupendous fane,
The curious traveller hastes to search the place ;
When lo ! its walls an hideous form contain,
To represent a Deity of grace.

The soul dislodg'd by death, they fancy fled
In an inferior carcase to reside ;
Doom'd still in vagrant forms on earth to tread,
Until by frequent changes purified.

Some hallow'd rites to sinful man perform,
Deck with omnipotence a creature frail—
Thus, low in dust before a fellow-worm,
The Tartar tribes their mighty Lama hail.

The Hotentot with wild outrageous joy,
The moon's young rising crescent first surveys ;
And frantic dance and song the night employ,
Till sacrifice their wrathful God allays.

With fervor more sublime, but yet untrue,
Zora'ster's votaries worship sacred fire ;
Bow'd down to earth, the rising sun they view,
And God's bright work instead of him admire.

Some an impostor for their prophet own,
 And boast Mahomet's, not the Savior's, name—
 With cruel swords build up his bloody throne,
 And hope a sensual paradise to claim.

So hopes the wild American to roam
 Where distant worlds shall yield him nobler chase—
 And joyous bears his Sire to his last home,
 With arms and tools well furnish'd for the place.

To trace the wand'rings of the erring mind,
 An endless melancholy task appears ;
 Such monstrous Gods and monstrous creeds we find,
 As prove our fall, and urge contrition's tears.

Here is a desert of unbounded scope,
 With thorns and weeds rank springing all around—
 What pow'r can root them up, what skill can hope
 To cultivate such long-neglected ground?

To preach to such as these a Gospel pure
 That spares no idol, tolerates no sin—
 To tell of God, whose blood their guilt must cure,
 Who plants his grace, and builds his throne within ;

Whose rich benevolence the pride disdains,
 That seeks to purchase what his love bestows;
 Which tells how honour in the humble reigns,
 That rather wins than vanquishes its foes.

This is a war with all the world to wage,
 Reverse its maxims and its manners change;
 Its pomp, its wisdom, and its vice t' engage,
 Its courts, its schools, its customs to derange.

This is to chase the tempter from his throne,
 Storm his strong holds, and set his vassals free;
 Beat the old dragons of delusion down,
 And make the legions of destruction flee.

But, is it easy darkness to dispel?
 Will bigot man his idols soon resign?
 Ah! no—the thought rekindles rage in hell,
 And all its pow'rs against the work combine.

E'en in our Christian land some demons rise
 To whisper cautious prudence in our ears—
 Forth step the learned and the worldly wise
 To raise objections, and suggest their fears.

So when of old the Man of God was fir'd
 To raise Jerus'lem from its state forlorn,
 The lukewarm Jews and Persian wits conspir'd
 To laugh, and mock his holy warmth to scorn •

Oh ye, whose tender spirits cannot bear
 The slightest cross that nature's doom'd to feel,
 Assist your brother with your purse and pray'r;
 But ah! condemn not his more ardent zeal!

Dangers his strength may to the utmost prove—
 An honor'd martyr he perchance may fall—
 He knows it—but he knows his master's love
 Shall, more than conquer'r, bear him through it all.

But later days, as well as ancient, prove
 What ample harvests patient toil shall gain;
 How God repays his servant's faithful love,
 Nor lets the soil receive the seed in vain.

The wand'ring Eskimaux, who lov'd to roam,
 Wild as the deer that trace his frozen plains,
 Has found in Zion happiness and home—
 Bound to the Cross by love's almighty chains.

• Nchem. iv. 3.

The Iroquois, by fiercest passions torn,
 Who scalps his foe, and triumphs in his smart—
 Whose vanquish'd warriors death and torture scorn,
 From Jesus learns a meek and lowly heart.

The torpid native of the frigid pole,
 Cold as his ice, and rugged as his bears,
 Has learnt above his whales to love his soul,
 And e'en Moravia's yoke with patience wears.

And thus America's half savage tribes
 Have heard sweet music in the Gospel's sound,
 Have felt what peace with fellowship resides,
 And with success the Brethren's ardor crown'd.

Now Africa distinguishes her friends—
 Her shore a British colony receives *,
 And to our isle her hopeful sons she sends,
 To catch the pollish education gives.

The lofty barriers, rais'd by human pride,
 Whence haughty pow'r rude poverty contemns,
 Which men, by colour, or by clime divide,
 Religion knows not, and the truth condemns.

* Sierra Leone Company.

It strips the nations of distinctions vain,
 Heals up the breaches guilt at first begun;
 Nor Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free, remain,
 Where he is Lord, and all his flock but one *.

Long has the thund'ring voice of war been heard,
 And far and wide the bloody flag unfurl'd—
 Soon may the banners of sweet peace be rear'd,
 And happy union bind a jarring world.

Unpity'd legions madly robb'd of breath,
 Have press'd the earth with carcases of slain,
 Have glutted with their blood insatiate death,
 And bled and died, alas, in contest vain!

The deed is past—but ah! the guilt remains
 A crimson charge before th' Almighty throne,
 No tears of ours can wash away the stains—
 No present duty for past crimes atone.

Yet while our faith the great atonement pleads,
 And deep repentance bows us down with shame;
 True reformation will reverse our deeds,
 And knowledge, pow'r, and wealth abus'd, reclaim.

* Col. iii. 11.

Oh ! ye who feel the patriotic glow,
 Who pant to raise your country's blasted fame ;
 Who would, reviv'd, her truth and justice show,
 And gratitude inspire with Britain's name ;

And ye, whose more enlighten'd passions find
 A neighbour, in each wretched son of earth,
 Who love your God, and all of human kind,
 However shaded, and where'er their birth ;

If ever truth impress'd with pow'r your heart,
 If freely you the Saviour's mercy found—
 The glad'ning news to guilty souls impart,
 And spread the tidings of salvation round.

The patient hope, the labor love-inspires
 A righteous God will not behold in vain ;
 The good you do—the blessings earth acquires,
 In heartfelt joy shall visit you again *.

Who made the promise will produce the day,
 When sevenfold light shall o'er the world abound †,
 When all the kingdoms shall confess his sway, ‡
 And paradise once more on earth be found.

* Psa. xxxv. 13. † Isa. xxx. 26. ‡ Rev. xi. 15.

To be published by Subscription, Price Three Shillings.

A VOLUME OF POEMS,
 ON RELIGIOUS, MORAL, AND ENTERTAINING SUBJECTS,
 BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

Subscriptions received by the AUTHOR, and Mr. T. CHAPMAN,
 No. 151, Fleet-street.



